

Just When You Think They Have
Lost All Interest in This World
There Comes a Change in Fortune

STREET'S END

BY DANA BURNET.
Who Finds Effective Drama in the Lives of
Ordinary People

THERE was a figure, he noticed, ahead of him as he came out of the shadow of the houses into the open park at the street's end. It walked before him, vaguely discernible, moving with a directness that gave purpose to its progress. It troubled him. There was mockery in the thought that its purpose might duplicate his own. A fine mist blurred the lights of the houses that stood grouped about the little park. The houses reminded Martin of Paris. He remembered the march up the Champs Elysees in the drizzling rain between rows of buildings something like these. Paris! He laughed.

Beyond the park was a stone terrace with broad steps leading down to the river's edge. Martin began to walk down toward the black water.

Then he saw her, sitting huddled on the bottom step. A woman—a girl.

She heard his step behind her and gave a start and a cry, shrinking away from him. Martin stood still. "It's all right; I ain't no bull," her voice came in a quick whisper. "Whatcha want?"

"Nothin'," said Martin.

"Whatcha don't here?"

"Nothin'."

"Neither in I."

She leaned back on one arm, her face turned up toward him. It was a sharp, triangular face white, with two dark spots for eyes.

"Outa luck, huh?" she queried.

"I'll say so."

Her glance made note of a shrunken Army jacket.

"Soldier?"

"Yeah. Was."

"No work?" Martin shook his head. "Sit down. Make yourself at home."

Her pert humor, with its ironic undertone, drew from him a sheepish laugh. He sat down beside her on the stone step.

"I see you walkin' ahead of me. I had a hunch where you was goin'."

"Yeah."

"You outa luck, too?"

"You said it, bo."

"What was you goin' to do?"

The girl studied his profile, dimly revealed in the mist. He repeated his question.

"Jump in," she said shortly.

"Take a nerve," said Martin. "I been here before. I mean—to the river."

"And you couldn't do it?"

"Well—I mean—I thought I might as well hang on—a while longer."

"Not for me!" exclaimed the girl. "You had it pretty tough, huh?"

"Rotten."

"Well, say—I mean—let's go to—"

This time she looked at him frankly.

"You scared?"

"Yeah."

"And you a soldier! Maybe you didn't get across, though?"

"Sure I did," said Martin.

"France?"

"Yeah. And Russia. It was frightful. I got hit with a piece of shrapnel. In the hospital six months."

"Was you scared then?"

"Yeah. I didn't know what happened. So far away from home and all."

"You got a home?"

"Died."

"Married?"

"Naw. Just my mother and me."

"What happened to her?"

"Died."

"While you was over there?"

"Yeah."

"Gee."

NEITHER spoke for some time. Then, "What's your name?" he asked.

"Minnie. What's yours?"

"Martin."

The girl gave a fluttering laugh. "Funny, ain't it, our bein' here?"

"Yeah, it's funny, all right."

"Whadda y' s'pose?" She paused, trying for speech. "Whadda you s'pose it's all about?"

"Gosh! I don't know."

"It's the bunk, ain't it?"

"Sure, it's the bunk, all right. Fightin' them Russians, and the bushes and all, and gettin' the bum's bum when you get home."

"Yeah; it's worse since the war. But it always was a punk game. Makes you sore—don't it?—when you walk up the Avenue on an empty stomach and see all the guys and dames ridin' round in fancy buzz-wagons? Gee! I could live the rest of my life on what they spend for gas."

"I used to feel that way, too. But it ain't their fault! It's just luck."

"Yeah! That's right. Often I used to think I'd like to throw a brick through some of them plate-glass windows on the Avenue, but then I thought s'pose I hit some nut that ain't got it comin' to him."

"Sure! You can't tell. Some of them birds is all right. I met a guy in Russia—he was one of them bolshies—'kidd' you know. He was in the hospital with me, and he could talk American. He taught me a lot of them Russian songs and dances, after we were up and around. Well, he was tryin' to tell me I should start a revolution over here when I got home, but I says, 'Gosh, we had a revolution once. I says, and now look, I says, you can't even get a glass of lager.' Kinda kiddin' him, see? Well, he never said nothin' for three days—peach, three days. And then he says to me, 'Martin, he says, 'you're right, he says. We had to do what we done in Russia because it was the only thing to do. I believe in bolshivism,' he says, 'because it's all for the workin' man and all, but what the world needs, he says, 'ain't new forms of government. It's a new state of mind.' Now, whadda you make of that?"

"Gee, I don't know."

"I figured it out this way: What he meant was if everybody'd quit tryin' to grab off everything for himself and try to act—you know—more on the level, and kinder—"

Martin stopped, overcome by the futility of attempting even a statement of the world's need.

"But you can't blame 'em," he added.

"I ain't hadda chance, wouldn't I grab off all I could for myself? I'll say I would."

"So would I," said the girl. "You just betcha!"

Silence.

"Well," said Martin. "Guess we better be shovin' off."

"Yeah."

But they did not move. It was very still.

"Say—Minnie—"

"What?"

"If you had a chance, whadda you rather have than anything else?"

"Who—me? I'd like to have one of them big cars, and a place to go to—an apartment. With nice curtains, and a sofa with cushions on it—you know, like they have in the movies—"

"Sure!" said Martin sympathetically.

"Whadda you like to have—if—"

"I'd like a car, too. And a guy dressed up in one of them monkey suits to drive me round. You know—a shofar. A shofar named James."

"Why?"

"So's I could get in and say, 'Home, James!' She laughed. "And I'd like a place down the island," continued Martin dreamily. "Like Far Rockaway, or somewhere—you know."

"Yeah. With a garden—"

"Sure! A garden."

She looked at him, and he thought that she was smiling.

"Funny—ain't it?"

"Funny—yeah! I feel like we was old friends."

"So do I."

"Say—Minnie—"

"What?"

"How'd you come to—what give you the idea? I mean, the river—"

"I was sick of the whole works. I had enough of it."

"I bet it was some guy—"

"Yeah," said Minnie, vaguely.

"The dirty dog?"

She glanced at him, her hands playing with the cheap handbag in her lap.

"He—he was a dog, all right."

"Whadda he do to you?"

"Well, I'll tell you. Say, got a cigarette?"

"Sure!" He fumbled in his pocket, produced a crushed packet, which he held out to her.

"It's your last one."

"Go on; take it. I don't wanna smoke."

"Thanks!"

HE struck a match for her, observing, by the flare of it, the youthful curve of her lips, the gleam of her cheek, the dark curl of her lashes. She was pretty.

"Say, got some fingersnaps in my bag. Want one?"

"Sure. I don't care—"

He munched them hungrily while she smoked.

"They're good. I ain't had a feed since yesterday mornin'."

"Gee!"

"What was you sayin' about that guy?"

Minnie blew a cloud of smoke into the April mist.

"Well, it was like this—see? I was workin' in a store and this guy—his name was Harry—Harry Van Kirk—he used to come and talk to me over the counter. I was at the gent's neckwear. Well, he says to me, 'Minnie, he says, 'marry me, he says, 'and you can have anything you want. I got lotta dough,' he says. He used to take me in his car. Some car!"

"You was married to him?"

"Yeah. And we had a swell apartment and all. Only, he wouldn't tell me what his business was. Then, one day, the bulls come and pinched him for runnin' a gamblin'-joint—see? And on topa that a dame blew in from—from Alaska and says he was married to her when he was a gold-miner."

"Gee, Minnie!"

She turned to him. What's the story of your life?"

"Oh, it ain't nothin'. Only, I had a good job before the war. I was in a storage warehouse—on the movin' end. We had a nice little flat over on West 138th street, me and my mother—"

He suddenly put his face in his hands and gave a whimpering cry. The girl slipped her arm about his shoulders.

"That's all right, bo! She's better off where she is."

Martin sat quietly, his elbows on his knees. Minnie withdrew her arm, but her shoulder still pressed his.

"Well, then, the war come and I was drafted. I was in France and Russia—three years. When I come home she was dead. I couldn't get my job back because I got hurt in the shoulder, and I couldn't do no heavy liftin'. I tried to get some light work. I was night watchman on a construction job for a while, and I got thirty days for vagrancy—that helped. And the rest of the time I slept in doorways and on park benches—only, the bulls run you outa there."

"Gee! I don't blame you for givin' it the go-by."

"Well, I was hungry, and I didn't see no chance—"

"Me, neither."

His hand groped for hers, found it and squeezed it.

"I'm glad I met you, Minnie."

"Same here! It's kinda nice—havin' somebody to talk to. Say—it must be gettin' late."

They looked at each other.

"Well?" said Minnie sharply.

"I'm game, if you are."

"I'm game," Her glance wavered, was turned toward the river. "Gee! It looks cold." She pressed against him, trembling. Her voice was a wail. "I don't wanna die, Martin!"

This time it was he who put his arm round her.

"Look, Minnie! Don't cry. We can try it a while longer. We'll stick together—I and you. Huh?"

"Stick together?"

"Sure! I'll start in lookin' for a job again. Maybe I can get some-thing. And if I don't—well—we can always come back here, can't we?"

"Yeah. That's right."

"Sure! As soon as I get a couple dollars saved up we'll go down to City Hall and get a license and get married. And then nobody won't have nothin' on us."

She drew away from him.

"You're a good guy, Martin. And I—her voice was bitter with self-reproach—"I'm a dirty liar."

Martin looked at her in surprise.

"It's a fact. I'm a liar. I was married, all right—but not to no swell guy. That wasn't no such fellow—like Harry Van Kirk—I got the whole thing outa the movies. I never was in no department store. My old man kep' a saloon on the East Side; he's dead now. I met my husband there; he was

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"Well," said Martin. "Guess we better be shovin' off."



THE DAY MADE NOTABLE FOR THE DANCING TEAM BY MRS. KINGOUR'S TEA.

a dancer. He taught me. We done cabaret work. He was a bad actor—used to beat me up. Well, after two years of it, I left him and teamed up with another guy. And, after that—I just kinda kep' goin' down." She drew a deep breath. "Well, I guess, maybe—you don't wanna try it with me—now."

"Why not?"

"Well, because I—"

"Say—when you're down and out, whadda the difference how you got there, I ain't told you everything. I pinched a ten-spot off a guy one night."

"You did?"

"Sure! I was hungry. I hadn't had only a cup of Java since the day before. This was at night. This guy was just gettin' out of a taxi. Well, he flashes his wad and pays the taxi, and then puts the bills back in his overcoat pocket. It was pretty crowded, and I got close to him. I felt kinda weak, but I done it. Oh, boy! Didn't I have some feed that night! And a bed, too."

"I don't blame you, Martin."

"And I don't blame you—for nothin'." Look, Minnie, you kinda lie back against me, and I'll put my coat around you—like this—and you go to sleep."

She settled down gratefully into the hollow of his arm, looked up at him and smiled; then her eyes closed.

He sat holding her, aware of something precious in this strange guardianship. His head nodded, fell forward on his breast. He, too, slept.

HE was awakened by the insistent beat of a hurdy-gurdy. It was broad daylight. But there was no one in sight—not even a cop. He gently woke the girl.

"Minnie, wake up! We gotta beat it away from here."

She sat up quickly, yawning and rubbing her eyes. Then she smiled.

"Martin?"

"Yeah. You're all right. Come on, we gotta be goin'."

He took her arm and they walked together up the steps of the terrace. The park dawned on them suddenly with an effect of virgin beauty. In the center of it was a small circular space, paved, where a fountain tossed free silver into the air. Minnie stopped to drink.

"Have one on me!" she said, with a droil smack of her lips.

"Who wants us?" she demanded.

"Mrs. Kingour, miss. She saw you dancin' in the park 'ere, and said would you kindly step into the 'ouse a moment. She'd like to 'ave a chat with you."

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"I'LL GIVE YOU FIVE HUNDRED." MARTIN GASPED, BUT MINNIE SAVED HIM—AND THE SITUATION—FROM DISASTER.

street opposite the park entrance. It burst suddenly into a raucous one-step. "Hey, Minnie! Let's dance!"

They were both laughing. It was a joke—a joke on them, but, chiefly, a joke on the world that had rejected them. That was the cream of the jest.

Minnie drew back her head and smiled at him.

"I'll say you are."

On the sidewalk outside the park a few passers-by stopped to stare at them.

"Look at them nuts!" grinned Martin. "I guess they think we're cuckoo all right."

The hurdy-gurdy, with scarcely a

pause, changed its tune to a drizzling selection with a castanet accompaniment. Minnie put her hands against his breast and pushed him away from her.

"I'll give the boobs something to look at!" she cried, and plunged passionately into an impromptu Spanish dance.

Martin stood gaping at her for a moment. Was this whirling, graceful figure the same he had seen bowed on the terrace steps the night before? There was no hint of death in her now. He gave a shout, and, running toward her, flung himself into a figure of the dance that he had learned from the bolshevik when he was a soldier in Russia.

Minnie left off her Spanish fandango and began to imitate his wild Slavonic gestures, improvising as she danced.

It is possible that they would have gone on till they both dropped exhausted, but a man in a cutaway coat and neatly pressed trousers came walking into the park—a bald, bland man without a hat.

Minnie saw him first and stopped, panting. Martin whirled in midair, cracked his heels together and came down face to face with the phenomenon.

It startled him. Instinctively he dodged, doubling his feet. The bald man fell back a step, then recovered himself.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the latter, with a formality that was obviously a point of honor with him; "you're wanted."

"Wanted?" growled Martin. It was an ominous word. He glanced aside at Minnie.

She read the question in his eyes and gave a slight shake of her head. Then, turning to the bald man:

"Who wants us?" she demanded.

"Mrs. Kingour, miss. She saw you dancin' in the park 'ere, and said would you kindly step into the 'ouse a moment. She'd like to 'ave a chat with you."

"Martin?"

"Yeah. You're all right. Come on, we gotta be goin'."

HE followed the butler up two more flights of stairs to a room on the top floor at the rear of the house. It was a large white room, with a bed in it and a couch against the wall.

"I'll send one of the maids with the costumes," said the butler. "You're to ring if you want anything."

His bald head disappeared down the corridor. Martin gently closed the door and leaned against it.

"Holy cat!" was what he said.

Minnie sank down into a chair and laughed. Then she began to sob. Martin was frightened. He went to her and put his hand on her shoulder.

"Buck up, Minnie—Minnie!"

"Yeah. I'm all right."

She straightened up, gasping. "Well, gee, here we are!"

"Here we are! It's right." They gazed at each other. What are we gonna do now? Look; we got six or seven hours. We'll practice here. I'll teach you. She won't hear us. We gotta do it, Martin!"

Martin grasped her hands.

"You're some game kid, Minnie. I'd take a chance with you any day."

"That a boy, Martin!" she laughed excitedly. "Come on! We'll start on our feature number. You'll be sittin' on a park bench—see?"

"The sofa—that's right—no; bend over. You're all in, see? There! Hold it. Now I come in." She moved toward him, humming a dance-tune, her body swaying. "I'll tap you on the shoulder, and you rise to me. That's it! Now break—keep dancin'! Not too much jazz. All right; come back. Faster, now!"

They were interrupted only twice in the three hours following—once by the maid who brought the costumes and again by the imperturbable Johnson, bearing a luncheon tray.

"Mrs. Kingour wishes to know whether you feel rested," he said.

"Oh, fine!" said Minnie. "Great!"

"Very good, miss. Thank you, miss."

The correct, blank man went out. They pounced on the food.

"Gee, Martin! Grapefruit! And chicken patties—no! It's sweetbread! We wasn't eat—to show we ain't starved."

"Well, you see, Mrs. Kingour, we gotta new feature. We're just workin' on it. It's called the 'Dance of the unemployed.'"

"Oh, really? How extraordinary! Rather clever of you, though. I understand there's been a great deal of unemployment this year."

"It's the latest thing," said Martin, suddenly finding his tongue.

"I'll be a hit," put in Minnie confidently.

"But I don't quite see why you should choose the park?" said Mrs. Kingour.

"We wanted to get into the feelin' of it," answered Minnie. "You know, us artists hafta—kinda—get into the

spirit of our work. Why, we sat up half the night out there—just kinda gettin' into the spirit of it. That's why we're dressed like this. I'm supposed to be a poor sho-girl—and Martin's a returned soldier—out of a job."

"Really?"

"That's right," said Martin.

"Atmosphere," explained Minnie. "That's what we wanted—atmosphere."

"Yeah."

"And, Martin, when we join our dance this afternoon, if you lose your nerve, just think of grapefruit and sweetbread patties!"

"And that five hundred bucks!" sighed Martin. "Don't you worry, kid. I'll be there with a wallop."

"When they had finished, Martin carried the tray out into the hall and, returning, locked the door."

"Time to go to work again, huh, Minnie?"

"You're on! We'll jump right into the second part of it. You know, where you push me away and I spin around. Ready? You bet the tune in your head? All right—go!"

They practiced furiously for another hour and a half. Minnie evolved their "feature" of assorted professional fundamentals and leaving for herself the more complicated movements. Martin lacked entirely the girl's experience, but he was quick and wiry, and he picked up the steps with a precision that caused the girl to exclaim:

"You're a natchel-born dancer, Martin!"

"I guess I'm pretty fair. I learned them Russian dances right off the bat." He stopped, his arm round her waist.

"Say, Minnie; you look awful tired."

"Yeah. I'm tired all right."

"Look! You better lie down on the bed and take a nap. What's that door over there?" He crossed the room and opened the door. "Gee! It's a bathroom—all white tile. Come and look."

She walked over to him.

"Say, Minnie; why don't you take a nice hot bath and then go to bed? You got plenty of time. The dame'll call us."

HE pushed her into the bathroom, closed the door, and, walking over to the couch, flung himself down on it. His body ached. He was dead tired.

But he couldn't sleep. He lay with his arm over his eyes, his mind full of broken thoughts, of odd bits of memory.

He heard her come out of the bathroom. She spoke to him quietly.

"Martin?"

He didn't answer. She lay down on the bed. He waited till he was sure she was asleep. Then he got up and went over to her.

She was lying on her side, her cheek on her hand. Her hair was down about her shoulders. In her underwaist, with her dress thrown over her, she looked small, childish. Tears came into his eyes.

There was a blanket on the foot of the bed, a pink, fluffy thing. He unfolded it, and spread it over her. Then, stooping, he touched her cheek with his lips.

She stirred. He tiptoed back to the couch and lay down again. He couldn't fall her. Five hundred dollars! A place with a garden at Far Rockaway or somewhere. "Home, James!"

An hour later, Johnson knocked at the door. Martin rose and opened it.

"Mrs. Kingour says you'll be wanted soon," announced the butler. "All right," said Martin.

Minnie was sitting up, smiling at him.

"Time for our act—huh?"

"Yeah. How'd you sleep?"

"Fine!" She jumped off the bed, holding the pink blanket round her.

"Where'd I get this thing?"

"I put it over you. Thought you might catch cold."

She took up her costume and started toward the bathroom, but stopped and looked at him over her shoulder.

"Say—Martin?"

"Huh?"

"Did you—when I was asleep there—did you kiss me?"

"Yeah. Kinda."

Her face grew strangely peaceful, strangely content.

"I didn't know. I thought maybe I dreamed it," said Minnie.

The dancing team of Minnie and Martin is famous in New York now, both in professional and in social circles. Its rise has been rapid. In fact, it never was heard of till the afternoon of Mrs. Kingour's tea.

But, on a certain April morning, a year from the day made notable by Mrs. Kingour's tea, a black and gold car rolled into the exclusive neighborhood of the wealthy Riverside community, turned about the park and came to a halt at the top of the terrace.

Minnie and Martin got out and walked down the steps. It was before daylight, and the air was chill. "It wasn't as cold as this a year ago," said Martin.

"No," said Minnie, and drew her fur-trimmed cape closer about her.

"They're down on the bottom step, their shoulders touching."

"Funny, ain't it?"

"Yeah; it's funny, all right."

They were silent a long time. The night was growing gray.

"Yeah, it's funny," Minnie's voice was slow with reminiscence. "Everything's different now. We're different, too."

"Sure!"

"Do you think we're any happier now than then?" Minnie spoke softly.

Martin laughed and put his arm round her.

"I'll say we are."

"Yeah! I guess we're happier all right. Only—"

"What, Minnie?"

"I don't know. Only—we've had something then—that we haven't got now. That's funny, too."

"You're right. I was just thinkin' that myself. What was it, Minnie?"

"I don't know. It was something we had—and it's gone. We won't never have it again."

Martin made no attempt to answer her. After a moment, he said:

"Well, I guess it's time we was goin'."

"Yeah." She got up and stood looking long at the river. Then they walked back up the steps.

The car was waiting for them. As they went toward it, Martin was conscious of a vague disappointment, bewildering to his mind. They were happy—yes. But the joke was no longer a joke. The cream had gone out of the milk.

He handed Minnie into the limousine and turned to the chauffeur.

"Home, James!" said Martin.

(Copyright, 1923.)

Drunkards' Retreat Is Kept by Kinglet

SCATTERED about the shores of the British Isles are islands, large and small, whose proprietors are monarchs of all they survey. In many respects they possess greater power over their "subjects" than is held by King George himself.

Although they owe allegiance to the British crown, yet parliament has no power to tax some of these island estates, nor can any one land on their shores without the permission of the owner.

Some of the islands are but a few acres in extent, while one of them is the largest island around the British coast, next after Ireland, and boasts of a fairly large population.

The special privileges mentioned have been granted in times past by some sovereign to his favorite tax-woman, he wished to give a mark of special favor. Like titles of nobility, these special privileges were made in perpetuity and still cling to the territories.

All who have read "Westward Ho!" will remember Lundy island, which lies in the British channel. Lundy is one of the best known of the tiny island monarchies. It is a delightful little jewel that was once the haunt of pirates and smugglers. It was at one time captured by French pirates and at another time sold into the hands of Turkish privateers. No one can dwell upon or even visit this bit of the earth's surface without the consent of the owner. It is exempt from taxation.

Lundy is probably not paradise, but it is actually the property of the Heaven family, and a clergyman of that name is the owner. He rules over a kingdom of 1,200 acres and fewer than a hundred souls.

Down near Land's End a great rock rises out of the bay that is known as St. Michael's mount. It is an island, and it is for or low tide a rough stone causeway connects it with the mainland. It is little more than a mile in circumference and is probably the tiniest of the island kingdoms. Perched on the summit of the rock, which is about 200 feet high, is the famous old castle in which the "king," Lord St. Levan, resides.

Clustered at the base, facing the land, is a tiny village composed of a score of houses where dwell the "subjects."

JUST south of the Isle of Man is a little island called the "Caif of Man." The original owner received from Queen Elizabeth a grant of this island, which was declared to be forever free from taxation. No one can live there, or even on its shores, without the consent of the owner. It is in every sense of the word private. The late owner was so engrossed in his books and lived so retired a life that years would sometimes elapse between his visits to the neighboring Isle of Man. Only a small part of the land is cultivated, and the whole is over-

ANOTHER little kingdom is the island of Rhum, whose potentate is Sir John Bullough. Nearly all the island is deep forest and moorland, and it is all mountainous. Only 300 acres are tillable. The subjects of Sir John number fewer than eight score. The whole island is one vast game preserve, where deer and other game roam to provide sport for the nobility.

The largest of these island kingdoms is doubtless Lewis island, one of the Outer Hebrides group, off the west coast of Scotland. It covers an area of nearly 700 square miles and has 37,000 people. It has several lochs, where splendid fishing is to be had. Over the moors and forest land the red deer still roam.

This island has had a stirring history, for the people have always been fighters. Many times have royal troops been defeated by the islanders. Many members of the royal family of England have been entertained at St. Mary's Castle, the residence of the owner.